

## Frequently Asked Questions

Over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids are now available for sale online and in many stores. You may have questions about if OTC hearing aids will work for you. Use these FAQs to help you understand the important steps in determining the best type of hearing aid for you.

### How much will OTC hearing aids cost?

It is estimated that OTC hearing aids will cost less than \$1,500 per pair. It is best to consult with vendor or retailer for exact pricing.

### How will I know if OTC hearing aids will work for me?

The best way to know if OTC hearing aids will work for you is to see an audiologist for a comprehensive hearing evaluation. This evaluation will show you the degree of hearing loss and the part of the ear—outer, middle, or

inner—that is causing your hearing loss. This information, taken together, will help you decide whether an OTC hearing aid is your best choice or if your needs would be better addressed by a prescription hearing aid.

**Important Note:** OTC hearing aids are purchased based on your own judgment. OTC hearing aids will only work for you if your loss is mild to moderate. It is easy to overestimate or underestimate your hearing difficulty. The most accurate diagnosis is made by an audiologist.

### Who can wear OTC hearing aids?

OTC hearing aids may work well for you if you have a mild to moderate hearing loss. They are not effective for a moderate to severe degree of hearing loss. You must be 18 years or older to wear OTC hearing aids. Children should

- ear deformity
- fluid, pus, or blood coming from the ear
- hearing loss or ringing (tinnitus) that occurs in only one ear or that is noticeably different in one ear
- pain or discomfort in the ear
- history of excessive earwax or feeling that something is in the ear
- sudden, quickly worsening, or fluctuating hearing loss
- vertigo or severe dizziness

never wear them. You must consult a medical provider before buying an OTC hearing aid if you have any of the following medical conditions:

**Note:** Individuals with cognitive or dexterity issues may not be suitable candidates for OTC hearing aids and should seek a consultation with an audiologist for hearing loss management.

|   | <b>OTC<br/>HEARING AIDS</b>  | <b>PRESCRIPTION<br/>HEARING AIDS</b>  |
|---|--|---|
|   | <b>vs.</b>   |   |
| <b>SELECTION PROCESS</b>                    | Self-selection; however, consumers may choose to consult with a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument specialist or non-licensed support personnel.   | Functional communication assessment with a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument specialist. |
| <b>FIT BY</b>                               | Self, licensed audiologist or hearing instrument specialist, or non-licensed support personnel.  | Licensed audiologist or hearing instrument specialist.  |
| <b>PRICE</b>                                | Estimated to be less than \$1,500/pair—consult vendor or retailer for exact pricing.   | ~\$1,000–\$7,000/pair—varies based on what services or warranties are included in the cost.       |
| <b>AGE</b>                                  | 18+  | 0+  |
| <b>HEARING LOSS DIAGNOSIS</b>               | Purchase <u>does not require a hearing test</u> ; hearing levels may be approximated through self-reflection, self-administered tools, tests, or software, or through a hearing test with a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument specialist. | Pre-purchase audiologic assessment required.  |
| <b>HEARING LOSS SEVERITY</b>                | Self-perceived mild to moderate.   | All degrees.  |
| <b>DESIGN</b>                               | One-size-fits-most or semi-custom; hearing aid must sit >10 mm from eardrum.   | Not limited by depth or design; includes custom-molded and invisible in the canal options.        |
| <b>RETURN POLICY</b>                        | Not required by the FDA; determined by manufacturer and state of sale; this information must be on the hearing aid packaging.  | Required in most states.  |
| <b>VERIFICATION OF AMPLIFICATION LEVELS</b> | Users seeking care from a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument specialist can inquire about verification measures compatible with their OTC hearing aids.  | Best practices include real-ear measurements (REMs) at the time of hearing aid fitting.           |